



Dana E. Blackwell
Executive Director

LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

COMMISSIONERS:
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ROBERT G. MCCAMAN
DR. LA-DORIS MCCLANEY
SANDRA RUDNICK
ADELINA SORKIN, CHAIR
REVEREND G. LIND TAYLOR
DR. HARRIETTE WILLIAMS, VICE-CHAIR

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **August 18, 2003**, in room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Patricia Curry
Phalen G. Hurewitz
Robert McCaman
Dr. La-Doris McClaney
Sandra Rudnick
Nina Sorkin
Rev. G. Lind Taylor
Dr. Harriette Williams

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused)

Carol O. Biondi
Brenda Galloway
Lily Griego
Helen Kleinberg
Daisy Ma

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda for the August 18, 2003 meeting was approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes for the July 21, 2003 general meeting were approved with amendments.
The minutes for the July 28, 2003 chair's meeting were unanimously approved.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dr. David Sanders reported on the following five activities taking place at the Department:

1. The Adoption Division has completed 750 of the approximate 1,950 identified backlogged home studies. The remaining home studies will be completed by October, as set forth in the Emergency Home Study Plan.

Planning for how adoptions will be handled in the Department is underway. Dr. Sanders indicated that the recommendations from the Integration Workgroup and review of the Torrance Project are under consideration. The overall goal will be to integrate adoption work into the regions to improve the timeline of the adoption process. Implementation will begin upon completion of the Home Study Plan.

2. Dr. Sanders stated that historically the Department has investigated a high percentage of calls received by the Hotline. This percentage is much higher than any other jurisdiction in the state. He indicated that the Department needs to improve its ability to define which calls require an immediate response and which calls do not.
3. With respect to Relative Care, Dr. Sanders expressed concern with the way in which relative placements are handled and the types of services offered to relatives. He believes that the Department, at the front end, needs to better define when a relative placement is appropriate and when it should be referred out. Dr. Sanders indicated that a workgroup has been convened, and he invited Vice Chair Williams to join the workgroup.
4. A report is forthcoming with respect to the reallocation of staff within the Department. The findings will be presented to the Commission at that time.
5. Dr. Sanders stated that the proposed organizational chart has been presented to the Board Deputies as well as the regional and assistant regional managers in the Department. Some feedback includes concern with whether the Department's staff can work together and how to better "make sense" of the programs the Department offers in light of the fact that these programs are split throughout the bureaus.

Commissioner Curry asked if referrals would be provided to Hotline calls when an investigation is not required. She further inquired as to which calls would not be investigated. Dr. Sanders reemphasized the need to develop clear guidelines for referral investigations. He is unclear about what sort of support service referrals are being provided now and believes that a mechanism will most likely need to be developed.

Commissioner Curry shared that within the Commission there is interest in family centered programs, the Hotline and other programs. She asked if there are groups within the Department that are meeting in which the Commission should participate. Dr.

Sanders responded that there are areas that would be critical for Commission involvement and that a list should be generated and provided to the Commission.

Commissioner Hurewitz added that the Adoption Workgroup model has been successful and suggested that it should be replicated to review other areas in need of evaluation.

With respect to the Hotline, Commissioner Hurewitz suggested the development of guidelines to assist the frontline staff in making the appropriate decision on whether a call is investigated or not. Dr. Sanders indicated that Structured Decision Making (SDM) is an amalgamation of policies over 10 and 15 years. He believes that staff is attempting to follow all of the policies in addition to the SDM tool. Finally, Commissioner Hurewitz suggested that physical space issues need to be addressed prior to moving adoption staff to regional offices.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Sorkin provided the Commission with the following calendar of events:

- For the Love of Kids (fundraiser supported by Supervisor Antonovich): August 28, 2003 from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm.
- Strengthening Community Capacity Symposium sponsored by the Children's Planning Council (CPC): October 10, 2003 from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.
- Los Angeles City Arts Department is hosting a conference on the importance of art in education: October 22, 2003 - October 25, 2003 at the Biltmore
- Joint Commission Meeting with the Mental Health and Probation Commissions: October 23, 2003 from noon to 2:00 pm.

Chair Sorkin announced that Commissioner McClaney will again chair the nomination committee and that she is available by phone or email as she prepares for the upcoming slate of officers to be presented on September 8th with elections taking place on September 22nd. Commissioner Curry questioned whether the procedures the Commission has followed in the past will be adhered to. Chair Sorkin indicated that Commissioner McClaney would make the decision as to how the elections will be handled. Commissioner Curry voiced her concern that if the election protocol is altered, the entire Commission should have input into the decision and the determination of election protocol. Commissioner McClaney explained the procedure she intends on following. They were in keeping with the established protocol.

Chair Sorkin stated that the 2003-04 Work Plans for the Service Planning Area Councils and the American Indian Council of the CPC are available.

Commissioner Taylor reported on the National Kinship Care Conference he attended. The theme of the conference was preserving and strengthening family resources. Additionally, there was focus on funding, public policy, and changes impacting kinship care. He stated that California appears to be at the forefront of the provision kinship services. The services of greatest importance to Kinship providers are support groups, training, and education. There was also a focus on maintaining family connections and

the way relative care maintains this critical aspect of a child's life. Finally, Commissioner Taylor commented on the important role faith-based organizations can be in providing support, training and resources to relative providers. Partnering with such institutions may be a way in which child welfare agencies can address the lack of funding available in this critical area.

Chair Sorkin announced that Commissioner Rudnick has agreed to chair the retreat committee. The first meeting will take place the week of September 8th.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Adoption: Commissioner Hurewitz indicated that the adoption work groups continue to meet and have the participation of various community stakeholder groups. These workgroups are focused on concurrent planning, consolidation and streamlining the home study and finalization process, recruitment and legal orphans. He indicated that the work groups have been successful and the adoption division is focusing on completion of the backlog of home studies.

Foster Care: Commissioner Rudnick indicated that there are recommendations from the original task force report that have yet to be implemented. The majority of these recommendations hinge on the allocation of staff. She is actively advocating for personnel to be identified and put in place.

Relative Care: Vice Chair Williams informed the Commission of the Relative Care Grand Rally that will be taking place in Washington D.C. on October 15th. Vice Chair Biondi may be able to attend. It is Vice Chair Williams' hope that the Department will sponsor relative care providers to attend the event. At the last Relative Care meeting, Antelope Valley Hope Foundation offered office space to accommodate support groups in that region. Vice Chair Williams announced the agenda items for today's relative care cabinet meeting, with particular focus on issues regarding KinGAP. Vice Chair Williams recognized Marcia Buck for her efforts toward the improvement of relative care services.

Commissioner Curry commented that there are many groups within the County structure developing and looking at the development of resource centers throughout the County. She suggested that the Commission begin looking at how these efforts and services could be combined so as to not duplicate services and resources. Vice Chair Williams agreed and suggested that a group be assembled to address this issue. Commissioner Taylor reminded the Commission that the Service Integration Branch is working on this effort.

OLD BUSINESS

Little Hoover Commission (LHC) Report Recommendations: In preparation for the Joint Committee meeting at which Toby Ewing from the LHC will be present to discuss the recommendations, Chair Sorkin indicated that she, Commissioner Curry and Commissioner Rudnick reviewed the recommendations. These recommendations will be submitted to the Mental Health Commission in preparation for the upcoming meeting.

The group proposes to support recommendations one and two without compromising the Office of the Ombudsman at the expense of the development of an Inspector General. Commissioner Curry added that each Commission will be submitting one or two recommendations and then coming to consensus on which recommendation to discuss with Mr. Ewing. After discussion about the rationale for supporting the recommendations, the Commission agreed to submit the recommendations as put forth by the committee.

NEW BUSINESS

Metropolitan State Hospital (MSH) – Department of Justice Report: Cynthia Lusch, Program Director Metropolitan State Hospital, stated that the US Department of Justice (DOJ) conducted an investigation at MSH in June and July 2002. As litigation is underway with regard to the findings of the investigation, Ms. Lusch indicated that she would only be able to speak in generalities about the findings of the report.

She stated that MSH is licensed under Title 22 and is accredited by the Joint Commission on Health Care Organizations and the federal program for Centers of MediCare and MediCal Services. To ensure that MSH is complying with the regulations under these agencies, regularly scheduled and unannounced visits are conducted; all of which MSH has passed. She stated that the DOJ conducted their investigation pursuant to the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act (CRIPA).

During the course of the DOJ investigation, MSH employed a consultant to assist in the development of an enhancement plan without necessarily agreeing with the findings of the DOJ report. Ms. Lusch went through the areas of concern cited in the DOJ report and briefly described what is being done to respond to the concerns. She indicated that MSH is changing their vision and mission based on a recovery model of health care rather than a medical model. This model focuses on the whole individual instead of treating symptoms. Additionally, policies and procedures are being developed and implemented with respect to treatment planning, assessments, length of stay, behavioral interventions, discharge planning, staff training, administration, evaluation and monitoring of psychotropic medication, risk management, diagnostic assessments, nursing and education.

Commissioner Rudnick asked if MSH continues to monitor youth once they have been discharged from the facility to ensure the compliance of medication. Ms. Lusch stated that when a child is discharged and continues to need medication, the receiving facility is provided with a 2 week supply of medication, an after care summary. However, it is the responsibility of the receiving facility to determine whether the prescribed medication continues to be appropriate. Additionally, MSH does a follow-up survey to determine if the children remain in the referred placement and if the subsequent placement was appropriate. While at MSH, the side effects of the medication are monitored. Commissioner McClaney stated that it is the obligation of the receiving facility to make arrangements with respect to medication.

Chair Sorkin asked if CSWs visit youth on a monthly basis while hospitalized. Ms. Lusch explained that Dr. Sophy is developing a protocol that would require CSWs to attend the treatment planning conferences with the 90-day treatment planning conference being the most comprehensive and important for CSWs to attend. Chair Sorkin asked if MSH must receive the approval of Juvenile Dependency Court when there is a change in medication. Ms. Lusch responded in the affirmative. Ms. Lusch indicated that the County has 69 designated beds with approximately 40% occupied by the Department, 40% Probation and the remaining are occupied by Mental Health. Chair Sorkin asked if WRAPAROUND is being made available to children who are discharged. Ms. Lusch stated that MSH is not responsible for the referral of this service. However, MSH does refer Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS). John Oppenheim stated that the public WRAPAROUND program focuses exclusively on children in RCL level 14 group homes.

Children's Planning Council: Chair Sorkin announced that the Commission office received a letter indicating that her term on the CPC expired on August 16, 2003. After consulting with both Vice Chairs, she recommended that the Commission vote on representation in October. Chair Sorkin will represent the Commission during the month of September. Commissioner Curry indicated that traditionally the Commission has not voted on who represents the Commission on the CPC.

Juvenile Justice Funding: Commissioner Curry presented the Commission with a draft letter to the Board of Supervisors requesting their support for the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act. The funding would provide preventive services, alternatives to incarceration, treatment and mental health services. This would be in keeping with the efforts of the Commission over time to prevent children from entering the probation system. The Commission unanimously approved the letter.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Warren Williams testified that there is a conflict of interest with respect to the Ombudsman Office. He believes that the Ombudsman should follow through with complaints. Additionally, he believes that the child welfare system is inherently flawed because children are unjustly separated from their families and the issues that brought the case to the attention of the Department are never resolved.

Marjorie Shelvey, Staff Attorney Legal Aid Foundation, testified that she has participated in a number of state hearings regarding monetary benefits to relative care providers. She stated that there continues to be a problem with relative providers not receiving foster care benefits and that relative providers are being denied and terminated foster care benefits in err.

Marriott Holloway testified that the Department is removing children from their families without cause or without providing adequate services toward reunification. He further voiced concern about parents being treated with dignity and respect.

MEETING ADJOURNED